

The Deification of Black Consciousness as an Alternative Ideology in Simphiwe Dana’s “Bantu Biko Street”

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Abstract

In the context of gender-based violence and xenophobia (black on black violence), the question is being asked whether black people hate themselves. Scholars have sought explanations for these social ills in socio-economic challenges that are a legacy of apartheid. These challenges have continued in the post-apartheid era. One cultural site in which poverty and violence have been reflected is the song “Bantu Biko Street” by Simphiwe Dana. The singer invokes Bantu Biko’s philosophy of Black Consciousness as a possible solution. This article closely reads this song and argues that the current government fails to deliver its material promises. The article also depicts Black Consciousness as a possible alternative ideology to foster black pride, hope and communal sharing.

Keywords: gender-based violence; xenophobia; apartheid; alternative; Bantu Biko; Black Consciousness; black pride; communal; sharing

The nation has not yet found peace from its sins; the freedman has not yet found in freedom his promised land. Whatever of good may have come in these years of change, the shadow of a deep disappointment rests upon the Negro people,—a disappointment all the more bitter because the unattained ideal was unbounded save by the simple ignorance of a lowly people. (Du Bois 1989, 7)

Introduction

It may be argued that the birth of Black Consciousness was a consequence of black people's resistance to oppression and racial discrimination. Black people were perceived as inferior and subhuman by white people. Black Consciousness was associated with black pride at a time when black people were stricken by the poverty, oppression, and racial discrimination that were characteristic of colonialism. During this time, black people were denied the education and employment opportunities that white people were enjoying. In a different scenario that is nonetheless relevant to the South African one, W.E.B. Du Bois (1989, 5) asks a question after he has observed African Americans being subjected to racial discrimination: "Why did God make me an outcast and a stranger in mine own house?" This question is applicable to the South African situation because racial discrimination and material poverty are at the centre of black people's lives. Because of racial discrimination and material poverty, black people had to do something to resist colonialism. In view of resistance, movements such as Black Consciousness and others were formed. While the Black Consciousness Movement was meant to conscientise black people, it was also made to alert them that they are on their own. In making sense of this view, Steve Biko (1987) perceives Black Consciousness in the following light:

Black Consciousness is in essence the realization by the black man of the need to rally together with his brothers around the cause of their operation—the blackness of their skin—and to operate as a group in order to rid themselves of the shackles that bind them to perpetual servitude. (Biko 1987, 49)

Biko in this explanation asserts the significance and the need for unity among black people to emancipate themselves from physical and mental oppression. This understanding also talks to the idea of physically working together as a group based on blackness or skin colour. Biko's emphasis on unity originates not only from black people's belief that they are indeed subhuman and inferior, but also from understanding the plight of black people as a result of the servitude, exploitation, and racial discrimination that were prevalent in black communities. Biko's ideas confirm not only his awareness of the dilemma of black people, but also his personal experiences of oppression as a black man. Bearing the latter in mind, Balingall (2006) affirms Biko's cognisance of oppression: "Biko's ideas, however, differed in an important way. He understood the oppression of Blacks, of Africans, indeed of the entire collective of previously colonized peoples around the globe, as stemming first and foremost from an attitude of self-defeatism and self-alienation" (Balingall 2006, 52). Biko touched first on the physical aspect of Black Consciousness, that recognising the importance of oneness as blacks and being subjected to oppression because of skin colour is a step closer to emancipation.

Biko similarly expresses the mental aspect of Black Consciousness that co-exists with the physical one. The mental aspect assists the oppressed to recognise the significance of self-love and self-pride as powerful tools that are needed in the struggle for liberation.

Concerning the latter, Biko asserts that “[t]he philosophy of Black Consciousness, therefore, expresses group pride and the determination by the blacks to rise and attain the envisaged self” (Biko 1987, 68). Hull (2017) adds that the “theorists of Black Consciousness insisted there could be no true end to racial oppression in their country without ‘an inward-looking process’—‘a self-examination and a rediscovery of ourselves’—on the part of the oppressed groups” (Hull 2017, 573). Both Hull and Biko emphasise the power of self-love and self-pride without which the struggle for emancipation will not deliver the desired outcomes. In another part of the world, but in similar circumstances, Du Bois describes a person who has finally acquired self-love and self-pride: “He sought to analyze the burden he bore upon his back, that dead-weight of social degradation partially masked behind a half-named Negro problem” (Du Bois 1989, 9). Summarily, Du Bois says self-love and self-pride open the eyes of the oppressed and make them aware of the societal challenges and their solutions.

Black Consciousness in many ways resembles or relates to Negritude. The unity that Biko says is central to Black Consciousness is also prevalent in Negritude. The centrality of unity in Negritude is confirmed by Abiola Irele (1964) who says “Negritude is therefore in the beginning a movement of black solidarity, sharply differentiated from the Marxist concept of class solidarity by a racial consciousness” (Irele 1964, 9). Irele’s description of Negritude, especially the use of “black solidarity” and “racial consciousness,” affirms the link between these two ideologies. This link of Black Consciousness to Negritude is articulated by Hull (2017) when he asserts that Black Consciousness was influenced by the founders of Negritude and other African thinkers:

The BCM theorists drew on African socialists such as Amilcar Cabral, Frantz Fanon, Kwame Nkrumah, the negritude thinkers Aime Cesaire and Leopold Sedar Senghor, writers from the American Black Power movement including Stokeley Carmichael and Eldridge Cleaver, and Black Theology, particularly as interpreted by James H. Cone. (Hull 2017, 574)

While mentioning these African activists exposes their identity as black people, it also tells of their influences in both formulating and entrenching their ideologies whose formations can be attributed to the plight of racial discrimination. Hull implies that the influencing of one ideology by another originates from having the same enemy and similar objectives, which are to liberate a black child who is entrapped in the veil of oppression. So, since Black Consciousness was influenced by other movements such as Negritude, American Black Power and Pan Africanism that sought to unite black people against oppression, similarities in certain areas were inevitable. The latter implies that the link between these African movements is self-explanatory and enormous.

The above view is questioned by some critics who show that although Africans share similar challenges within their communities, they do not have a singular way of dealing with the legacy of apartheid. This shows that black people have different subjectivities in the post-apartheid era. These subjectivities are mostly related to the material conditions of black people. It seems there is a relationship between material poverty and

intellectual brainwashing as black people are made to believe that they are an inferior race, subhuman, and can do nothing to elevate themselves from their situation. Concerning this link between material poverty and intellectual brainwashing, Biko suggests that Black Consciousness seeks to restore the dignity of black people. In addition, Black Consciousness emphasises the ethic of sharing, which is absent in post-apartheid South Africa. Bantu Biko laments this.

The Cultural Background of Simphiwe Dana

Simphiwe Dana is a jazz and Afro-soul singer who was born in Butterworth, South Africa. She is a Xhosa singer who also sings most of her songs in Xhosa. Butterworth is a small town in the Eastern Cape province in an area known as the former Transkei. She has produced several albums. She produced and sang many known songs such as “Bantu Biko Street,” “Zandisile,” “Mayine,” “Zobuya nin iinkomo,” “Vukani,” and many other good and informative songs. Most of Simphiwe Dana’s songs express the plight of black people and the challenges they are grappling with long after they have gained their independence. Dana’s music teaches the values of Black Consciousness and represents it as an alternative ideology that can liberate black people from the veil of poverty, racial discrimination, unemployment, crime, and other challenges that block the progress of black people in South Africa.

Simphiwe Dana in “Bantu Biko Street” depicts the challenges of black people in post-apartheid South Africa. It also lays bare the challenges of post-apartheid South Africa such as poverty and unemployment. Dana in this song offers Black Consciousness as a solution and an alternative for it encourages intellectual emancipation from mental slavery and inspires the culture of sharing in black communities. It also encourages unity among black people to be able to overcome these persistent challenges.

“Bantu Biko Street” and the Philosophy of Black Consciousness

The title of the song alone suggests that there is a relationship between the song “Bantu Biko Street” and Black Consciousness as an ideology that is linked to Bantu Biko. Since Bantu Biko Street is named after Stephen Bantu Biko, a Black Conscious Movement leader, people such as Simphiwe Dana have tended to associate this street with the values of Black Consciousness. Kuper (2008), in an online news article, affirms this by quoting Simphiwe Dana expressing her views about Bantu Biko Street: “Bantu Biko street is the only street paved with our hopes and dreams, our golden highway that must first exist in our mind” (Kuper 2008). The latter further represents Black Consciousness as a source of hope for the downtrodden and impoverished. Regarding the latter, Dana in the second verse of “Bantu Biko Street” (2006) emphasises the significance of unity among black people, something that is key in Black Consciousness:

Sizwe esimnyama
Soya njalo phambili
(Soya njalo phambili xa sime sibanye)

Sizwe esintsundu
Ungayek' ukukhathala
(Kungaba kuphelile xa ungakhathali)

Wawukhona
(Wawukhona)
Besithathela konke
(Wawukhona)
Sakhal' inyembezi

The first two lines in the above verse, “Sizwe esimnyama, Soya njalo phambili,” mean “Black nation, that is how we will move forward.” The chorus completes the phrase with “Soya njalo phambili xa sime sibanye,” implying “we will move forward if we remain united.” Simphiwe Dana’s emphasis that it is only through unity that black people will move forward shows the song agrees with Biko’s Black Consciousness. Regarding unity, Biko, in his explanation of what Black Consciousness is, argues it is the “realization by the black man of the need to rally together with his brothers” (Biko 1987, 49) to be able to liberate a black race from oppression and mental slavery. Dana further maintains that “Sizwe esintsundu, Ungayek' ukukhathala” to ask black people never to stop caring and being united. To complete the assertion the chorus adds “Kungaba kuphelile xa ungakhathali,” meaning it would be over if you stop caring and being united.

The singer here is not only expressing the power of unity, but also the relevance of Black Consciousness to improving the conditions of black people since the current government has decided to ignore them. What the song “Bantu Biko Street” says about Bantu Biko and Black Consciousness is further confirmed by Kuper (2008) when he quotes Simphiwe Dana’s assertion in an interview that “[i]t’s about Biko and his ideals and his dreams and hopes for us, you know, his children. That’s why I sing the song and I wrote the song because I felt we needed someone to look up to, someone whose flag we can hold high and be proud of” (Kuper 2008). The articulation of Biko’s Black Consciousness as a source of hope for blacks and an alternative to the government that has distanced itself from the needy and black people further explains the objectives of Black Consciousness and its caring for the poor and marginalised.

Another interesting song by Simphiwe Dana is “Zandisile” (2004), which connotes expansion or growth. Zandisile is usually the name that is given to a boy child with the hope that he will grow the family or clan. Dana in this song speaks to Zandisile as her son whom she expects to take over where she left. In articulating this, she says:

Enza njalo Zandisile
Ndibek' ithemba lam kuwe
Ndibonile Zandisile
Ongeke ukubone wena
Sesidlulile zulwini

Nethambeka liyehlela (Nethambeka liyehlela)
 Zukumbule Zandisile (Zukumbule Zandisile)
 Nguwe, nguwe ilifa lam (Nguwe, nguwe ilifa lam)

The first two lines of this verse say, “Enza njalo Zandisile, Ndibek’ ithemba lam kuwe,” which means “Do like that Zandisile, I am putting my trust in you.” Dana seems to be content with Zandisile who is following in her footsteps as she has decided to put her trust in him. It further says “Ndibonile Zandisile, Ongeke ukubone wena,” meaning “I have seen Zandisile, that which you cannot see.” Dana here does not only show her experience, but also that she knows more and has seen it all. Dana is talking about the oppression and ruthlessness that black people have seen and had to endure. She continues to say, “Sesidlulile zulwini, Nethambeka liyehla,” meaning “we have defeated the challenges and things are better now.” Dana uses the metaphor “zulwini,” that is heaven, not to talk about heaven, but the mountainous challenges that need to be climbed and passed to be where we should be. She concludes this verse by telling Zandisile “Zukumbule Zandisile, Nguwe, nguwe ilifa lam.” She is asking Zandisile to always remember that he is her heir. In the next verse, Dana speaks like an elderly person who knows that her day to depart the living is not far when she says:

Uzowuwela lo mlambo
 Uthathe ndakuphelelwa mna
 Ngamaqhawe angehlulwa nto
 Uliqhawe, iqhawe lam
 Zumamel’ ekuthuleni
 Isand’ esokuqondisa
 Zu zungakhonz’ inyembezi
 Amandla nguwe ungazideli

Dana commences this verse with the phrase, “Uzowuwela lo mlambo, Uthathe ndakuphelelwa mna,” which means “You will cross this river and take over when my time is over.” The river that Zandisile is going to cross is also used metaphorically to talk about the existing challenges: corruption, violence, poverty, crime, and unemployment, among others. She further says, “Ngamaqhawe angehlulwa nto, Uliqhawe, iqhawe lam,” connoting that “Only the heroes that remain undefeated, you are the hero, you are my hero.” Perhaps Zandisile is labelled a hero for his courage and willingness not only to take over where Dana left, but also to fight and confront the challenges that the nation is confronted with. The subsequent phrase asserts “Zumamel’ ekuthuleni, Isand’ esokuqondisa,” which means “Listen to the departed, the sound that will enlighten you.” “Ekuthuleni” is the word the Xhosas usually use to refer to the ancestors. In this case she may imply following the footsteps and words that the forebears had uttered. Lastly, Dana instructs Zandisile that “Zu zungakhonzi’ inyembezi, Amandla nguwe ungazideli.” Dana’s instruction to Zandisile is “He must avoid crying for he is power and must never underestimate himself.”

Interestingly, the song “Zandisile” confirms Dana’s love for poetry as it thrives on imagery. More important is the message that is synonymous to the one that is conveyed in “Bantu Biko Street.” Cleverly, Dana uses Zandisile to talk about the youth, the black youth of this country. She could be perceived as imploring the youth of today to copy the tactics of their elders and use them to overcome the challenges that affect the youth of today such as poverty, unemployment, crime, oppression, lack of opportunities and others. By encouraging the youth of today to do something about their situation, this song affirms Black Consciousness.

“Vukani” (2013a) is another song by Simphiwe Dana that is worth looking at. *Vukani* is the plural form of the Xhosa word *vuka* that connotes “wake up.” A lack of unity among Africans, black on black violence, xenophobia, tribalism and others are some of the challenges that prompt Dana to call on black people to wake up:

Vukani ngathi nilele
 Busuk’ obungenalitha
 Nzulu uthandw’ entliziyweni
 Ngeke side side side
 Side sibe ngabantw’ abanye
 Side sibe ndaweni enye
 Wathakath’ ekhay’ ulizim
 Ndenze ndiqondisise

In this first verse, Dana says “Vukani ngathi nilele, Busuk’ obungenalitha,” which signifies “Wake up you seem to be sleeping, in the darkest night.” Considering the challenges that confront the black youth and their communities, Dana uses this analogy of sleeping in the darkest night to explain the people’s failure to challenge not only the status quo, but also the challenges that have become part of their lives. She continues, “Ngeke side side side, Side sibe ngabantw’ abanye, Side sibe ndaweni enye,” meaning “We will never be the same people and be in one place.” Dana seems to be aware of the demographics that appear to be at the centre of our disunity. These demographics include tribe, language, geographical area, among others, that cause black people to sleep in the darkest night. She further maintains in the next verse that black people used to be united in the past until the arrival of oppression:

Sasisakulala ngasonye
 Silindel’ ingcinezelo
 Namhla nguwe
 Namhla nguwe
 Nzulu nzulu wasenz’ intsasa
 Nzulu inxeba esalishaywa
 Savuk’ ekseni sesizinkomo
 Mna nawe safel’ ubuntu
 Ndenze ndiqondisise

Dana begins this verse with the phrase “Sasisakulala ngasonye, Silindel’ ingcinezelo,”

which means “We used to sleep with one eye, waiting for oppression.” She is emphasising the significance of unity that black people had long before the arrival of the colonisers. The expression “Nzulu nzulu wasenz’ intsasa, Nzulu inxeba esalishaywa, Savuk’ ekseni sesizinkomo” signifies “Deep deep you polarised us, deep the wound that was inflicted on us, we woke up at dawn only to realise that we are cattle.” This phrase refers to the damage that colonialism has done to black people. The assertion “We woke up at dawn only to realise we are cattle” is used deliberately to tell that when black people lost everything, they became property as some were subjected to servitude. Cattle are often used to talk about the land that was stolen from black people.

Unity, which is at the centre of Black Consciousness, Pan Africanism and Negritude, is also one of the themes in this song. By making a wakeup call to Africans to unite against the challenges that black people wrestle with, this song agrees with Black Consciousness.

Another interesting song is “Zobuya nin’ iinkomo” (2013b), the title of which is interrogative as it asks “when will the cattle come back.” Cattle are often used in literature, especially poetry, metaphorically to talk about stolen African land. Undoubtedly, Dana is no exception as she also talks about land that was taken from Africans by colonisers. Dana is questioning when will black people get their land back. In the first stanza of this song, Dana poses this question:

Zobuya nin’ iinkomo
Emathafeni
(Zobuy’ ekuseni)

She asks “Zobuya nin’ iinkomo, Emathafeni, (Zobuy’ ekuseni)?” meaning “When will the cattle come back?” Dana is asking when will black people get their land back to be able to deal with the challenges of unemployment, poverty, education, unity and others, the existence of which can be attributed to the arrival of white people in the African continent. This is followed by the word “Emathafeni,” which means veld. By using the word *emathafeni*, Dana seems to suggest that the stealing of the African land was temporary for the cattle always go out in search of grass in the veld for a certain period and come back home eventually. *Emathafeni* is used to represent the colonisers of the African land. The last part of this phrase that is in brackets is expressed as a response to the question posed by the chorus. It says “Zobuy’ ekuseni,” meaning “they will come back at dawn.” This means that Dana compares or relates the situation of black people with these challenges to darkness (night). The dawn always follows the night, and this suggests that as soon as black people defeat these challenges, their cattle, that is land, will be returned. The depiction of black people’s unemployment, poverty, racism, tribalism, xenophobia and other challenges as darkness or night is unashamedly represented in the following verse:

Bophela nin’ obumnyama
Sekusile

Ndibon' ubuhle belanga
 Phezu kweAfrika
 Sidudelwe nguJambase
 Ntsuku zonke na

Dana in the first line of this verse poses another question: “Bophela nin’ obumnyama?” This question does not confirm the comparison of black people’s challenges to darkness or night, but asks when these challenges will end. The one-worded second line comes as a response to the question as it says “sekusile,” which connotes that “it is already morning.” The third and fourth lines expand the second line. The third line says “ndibon’ ubuhle belanga,” meaning “I see the beauty of the sun” to confirm that it is indeed morning. The fourth line says “Phezu kweAfrika,” which means “on top of Africa.” Seeing the beauty of the sun shining on Africa speaks to the independence of the African countries. Dana uses these phrases in this verse to assert that although we won our independence, the challenges that we were confronted with during oppression are still haunting Africa. Bearing in mind the independence of the African countries grappling with the resurfaced challenges, she asks “Sidudelwe nguJambase, Ntsuku zonke na?” which means “Are we hapless all the time?” The words “Sidudelwe nguJambase” are usually used by Xhosas when a girl or woman is not lucky to get married or find a husband until she grows old. She uses this expression to explain the extent of Africa’s misfortunes. The addition of “Ntsuku zonke,” which indicates “all the time,” is to make the point that Africa’s challenges appear to be timeless. Dana now talks about celebrations, self-hate and the healing of wounds in the next verse:

Zobuya nini iinkomo
 Siyobhiyoza
 Woyeka nin’ ukuzizonda
 Ophola nin’ amaxeba
 Kobuy’ ukukhanya

The above verse asks three questions that Dana believes are key to eradicating the challenges of the African continent. The first question in the first two lines asks “Zobuya nini iinkomo siyobhioza?” meaning “When will the cattle come back so that we can celebrate?” Dana wants to know when will black people get their land back so that they can celebrate. She is talking about the landlessness of black people for she knows the dignity that comes with owning the land. The next question in the third line is “Woyeka nin’ ukuzizonda,” that is, “When will you stop hating yourself.” Black Consciousness speaks about self-love as one of the most powerful tools black people should use to acquire their freedom. This means that self-hate is one of the things that stand in the way of black people. The third question asks “Ophola nin’ amaxeba?” which means “When will the wounds heal?” The wounds Dana is referring to are the challenges such as self-hate, racism, tribalism, unemployment and many others that have become a permanent feature in the lives of black people. The above three question are briefly answered in the last line of this verse. The last line says “Kobuy’ ukukhanya,” connoting “when the light comes.” Dana associates or relates sunshine or light to freedom. While

the light has not yet come, self-hate, racism, tribalism, xenophobia and other challenges have taken centre stage. Concerning oppression and other challenges, Dana recounts what white people say in the next verse:

Bathi bangcono kunawe (wo zinodaka kuseni)
Hay' abangcono kunawe (wo zinodaka kuseni)
Bathi bahle kunawe (wo zinodaka kuseni)
Batsho behleli phezu kwakho
Khaziml' ilanga ma uzamazama

This verse begins with the assertion “Bathi bangcono kunawe,” which is followed by a chorus in brackets that I am not going to say anything about for it is a repetition of something that has no major significance. The phrase in the first line that begins this verse means “they say they are better than you.” White people made sure that they spread a propaganda that white is better than black for many decades as they perceived black people as subhuman. This is the view that has been ubiquitous in the world. In another part of the world, but also relevant to this discussion, West (1999) quotes Tolstoy who does not believe that black people are human beings: “My God, I used to think they were animals; now they’re human beings. I have a different life and a new set of lenses with which to view it” (West 1999, 502). West wanted to prove that black people are also human like their white counterparts, despite power relations, as Dana suggests in the second line which says “Hay’ abangcono kunawe,” meaning “they are not better than you.” The third line asserts that “Bathi bahle kunawe,” meaning “they say they are more beautiful than you.” Even beauty has been prescribed according to white standards. This resulted in some blacks believing what white people were saying was true. Some went to the extent of not wanting to be black and denying that they are black. Concerning self-hate and denying that one is black, Frantz Fanon shares a relevant case:

Not long ago Etienneble described one of his disillusionments: “I was stupefied, as an adolescent, when a girl who knew me quite well jumped up in anger because I had said to her, in a situation where the word was not only appropriate but the one word that suited the occasion: ‘You, as a Negress—’ ‘Me? a Negress? Can’t you see I’m practically white? I despise Negroes. Niggers stink. They’re dirty and lazy. Don’t ever mention niggers to me.’” (Fanon 1967, 50)

This song questions when will the land be returned while simultaneously exposing the ways of white people. It emphasises the significance of freedom, the arrival of which will only be attained the day black people stop self-hatred and are united. These are features that are omnipresent in Black Consciousness, Negritude and Pan Africanism. The latter ideologies, especially Black Consciousness, are affirmed in this song.

Material Poverty in “Bantu Biko Street”

The consequences of colonialism are unquestionably dire as the former colonised and oppressed are still grappling with challenges whose existence can be attributed to former

colonisers. Despite the acquisition of independence by former colonies of Europeans, the challenges that haunted the African communities during colonialism keep on resurfacing fiercer than they were before. These challenges include the material conditions of black people, unemployment, gender inequality, crime, landlessness, racism, and others. The material poverty of black people is omnipresent in this song as the first verse says:

Andinayw' imali
 Yokuthenga zonke
 (Ezazizezam azikhw' eZazulwana)
 Kodwa ndakuthusa
 Xa kuthiwa makuyiwe
 (Kudala ndiw' gangatha kuphil' akuthengwa)
 Akuthengwa
 (Kuphil' akuthengwa)
 Yintoni leyo
 (Kuphil' akuthengwa)
 Khuza wena
 Asinakuyazi, hayi isimanga

In the first two lines, “Andinaywo’ mali, Yokuthenga zonke,” the artist asserts that she has no money to buy anything. The artist’s broke status suggests poverty and unemployment that are prevalent in African communities among black people. The artist also uses herself as representative of young black people. In this verse, the artist sings and immediately the chorus repeats or says something different to what the artist is asserting. It seems the repetition of the chorus is used for a reason or strategy. Vambe and Vambe (2006) explain the benefits of repetition in a song: “repetition collectivizes, mobilizes...” (2006, 57) and this has benefited this song. The response or repeat of the chorus is put in brackets in this verse. In this very same verse, Dana says “Kodwa ndakuthusa, Xa kuthiwa makuyiwe,” meaning “she was very shocked when it is said move forward or proceed.” It is not clear what the artist is implying here until the meaning is rescued by the chorus that explains “Kudala ndiw’ gangatha kuphil’ akuthengwa,” meaning “I have been in this world for a while, living is not for sale.”

By asserting that “living is not for sale,” the artist could be suggesting that people are dying from poverty and other related challenges. She could be saying this to articulate the fact that the lost lives of black people because of poverty are gone for good and cannot be bought back. Undoubtedly, the artist is reprimanding the government for not paying sufficient attention to the youth and the poor. The artist further says “Khuza wena, Asinakuyazi, hayi isimanga,” meaning “one must chastise this miracle.” Dana represents this as a miracle since it is unexpected and unusual of a democratic government to ignore the downtrodden. This discussion is relevant to this article since it discusses the material poverty and conditions of black people long after the attainment of independence.

The notion that “living is not for sale” could also be referring to a high and unaffordable health system that expects the poor and the unemployed to pay. Since Dana starts this verse with the declaration that she does not have money, she implies that black people’s inability to afford health fees exposes them to worsened health risks and deaths that could have been avoided. This implies that only those with resources can live longer for they can afford their health fees and access expensive medicines. Simphiwe Dana is calling for a free healthcare system that will be spread even to the poor. The discussion in this paragraph also explains and exposes the material poverty of black people, the oppressed. Considering the material poverty expressed in this paragraph, Dana directs her concerns to the president or government:

Nawe Mongameli
 Xa ubon’ abantu bakho
 (Unqandwa yintoni ungaphilis’ isizwe)
 Wena Mongameli
 Fundis’ abantwana bethu
 (Nants’ intw’ esay’ lwela ungathi ulibele)
 Sihamba nzima
 (Sihamba nzima)
 Siyazama
 (Sihamba nzima)
 Khuza wena
 (Ngathi sowubon’ indifanele le ndawo)

The first two lines, “Nawe Mongameli, Xa ubon’ abantu bakho,” meaning “Even you president, when you see your people,” are swiftly followed by the chorus “Unqandwa yintoni ungaphilis’ isizwe,” which asks “What prevents you from healing the nation?” The nation is represented as sick and needs to be healed. Simultaneously, the president or government is portrayed as the doctor or healer that can cure the sickness of the nation. Dana is using this analogy to express the seriousness of the challenges that haunt black people, old and young. The artist’s declaration that “Wena Mongameli, Fundis’ abantwana bethu,” meaning “You president, educate our children,” explains not only the inability of black parents to send their children to school as a result of poverty, but also the government’s failure to create education opportunities for the youth. Dana is calling for free education. After the singer, the chorus adds that “Nants’ intw’ esay’ lwela ungathi ulibele,” indicating “that is what we fought for, you seem to have forgotten.” The latter implies not only that access to free education is one of the things that they fought for during apartheid, but also that the nation has not yet attained its freedom. Both the calls to the president to heal the nation and to educate the youth expose and confirm the material poverty that black people endure in their everyday lives.

In addition to the material poverty discussed in the above paragraphs, mental poverty seems to be another vital challenge that Black Consciousness seeks to address. Mental poverty in the case of black people speaks to mental slavery or the inability of black

people to possess self-love, self-pride, and an awareness of their plight. This implies that the mind of the oppressed is being controlled by the oppressor. The oppressed believe what the oppressor says about them. Concerning the latter, Steve Biko claims that “the most potent weapon in the hands of the oppressor is the mind of the oppressed” (Biko 1987, 68), which after manipulation makes the oppressed believe that they are indeed subhuman and an inferior race. For black people to recognise themselves as human beings like white people, they need to be liberated mentally. Regarding this liberation, Bob Marley (Marley and the Wailers 1980) in “Redemption Song” encourages black people to free themselves from mental slavery for they are the only ones who can do that: “Emancipate yourselves from mental slavery, none but ourselves can free our minds.” Biko explains what happens to a man who is liberated mentally: “he cannot tolerate attempts by anybody to dwarf the significance of his manhood” (Biko 1987, 68). Considering what has been discussed above, Black Consciousness and Simphiwe Dana’s “Bantu Biko Street” appear to provide a solution to the challenges of black people long after the acquisition of independence. Cornel West uses an Afro-American popular music to confirm what Dana’s song is doing in standing for the voiceless, the poor, and the downtrodden:

Afro-American popular music depends not only on the talents of Afro-American musicians, but also on the moral visions, social analyses and political strategies that highlight personal dignity, provide political promise and give existential hope to the underclass and poor working class in Afro-America. (West 1999, 484)

Although West is referring to popular music by African Americans in America, the articulation of human experiences that popular music expresses shares similar characteristics with Dana’s music. If one can argue that the former is anticipated given the plight of African Americans, then West’s assertion makes sense if it is also applied in South Africa, for black people are still grappling with challenges that originated as a result of colonialism and historical materialism. Simphiwe Dana’s song “Bantu Biko Streets” fits West’s description of what music is expected to do as it talks about the plight of black people, which entails poverty, unemployment and the denying of access to other opportunities that are expected to be at the disposal of the historically disadvantaged.

The song “Bantu Biko Street” is sung in the Xhosa language to appeal not only to Xhosa speakers and other Nguni-language speakers, but also to a wider audience that includes non-Nguni speakers. Surely some Xhosa and Nguni speakers may choose to do what Rey Chow (1990) describes as the “separation between musicality and verblity [that he] mentioned as characteristic of many other songs” (Chow 1990, 141) with the aim of wanting to listen to the message of the song while some may focus on both “musicality and verblity.” The other audience that does not speak Nguni languages may choose to focus on the musicality without minding about the message. In the latter case, for instance, there are some listeners (especially those who support the ruling party) who, because they like the “musicality” of the song, do not care about the “verblity.” These

are happy with the sound and rhythm of the song. This may have been the artist's strategy to both convey the message and simultaneously increase the target sales. The latter mentioned strategy may have been used in Simphiwe Dana's "Bantu Biko Street."

Conclusion

The analysis of Simphiwe Dana's song "Bantu Biko Street" in this article confirms the material conditions of black people as central to the challenges that cloud black communities. This has created a feeling of hopelessness since young people are unemployed, poor, and have no access to education opportunities and expensive healthcare. Consequently, and having observed this dire situation, Dana perceives Black Consciousness as the only solution to the plight of black people. The singer invokes Bantu Biko's philosophy of Black Consciousness as a possible solution. The article closely read this song and argued that it highlights the current government's failure to deliver on its material promises and simultaneously depicts Black Consciousness as a possible alternative ideology to foster black pride, hope and communal sharing.

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